

Title: "Terrified by Colored Pencils" by Sharon Curry, Malakal, South Sudan

Theme: Use the gifts God gives us for good not bad.

Scripture verse: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." 1 Peter 4:10 (ESV)

Supplies needed: Colored pencil, picture of spear attached, picture of boy coloring (email wlgwin@att.net for electronic copy of picture)

Sermon: (Hold up a colored pencil) What is this?

(Hold up picture B -spear) What is this?

(Hold up both) What do they have in common? Long, sharp, pointed, etc.

(Hold up pencil) What do you use a pencil for? Drawing, writing, coloring, etc.

(Hold up picture of spear) What is a spear used for? Hunting, fighting, burning, etc.

If you have never seen a pencil, but people came to your houses during the night with a long, sharp, pointed object, what would you think it was?

I have a story to share with you today about our missionary, Sharon Curry. She lives in a tiny village in South Sudan (show map of South Sudan). One day, just about sunset, she went to the river with her sketch book and pencils to draw. A lot of children came to see her and what she was doing. She didn't have her pencils out yet, but she had her sketch book. They had never seen pure white paper before so they reached out, very slowly, to touch it. And they were not afraid. They were amazed that it was so white and there were no marks on it.

Then, she reached in her bag and pulled out a pencil. All the children jumped back or ran away. They were VERY afraid. Sharon didn't understand why they were afraid so she decided to show them what to do with a pencil. She began to draw. She drew a tukal (the mud houses they live in) and they started to come closer.

She reached in her bag and pulled out another pencil and they all jumped back again and were very afraid. She was very puzzled by that. So, she began to draw the river they were sitting by and the children were curious so they started coming closer. So, she drew the river for a while and just let them watch.

Next it was time to draw the trees and the fields on the other side of the river so she reached in her bag to get the green pencil. Some of the children cried and jumped back again, but some of the older ones stayed to see what she would do. So she gave them the pencil, turned the book over so they could have a clean page, and one very brave little boy took the pencil in his hand. He looked at it and studied it and then put it on the paper and moved it around. When the color showed up on the paper, he was very happy.

Soon the other children started to come closer and one or two reached their hands out to try it too. They were very happy when they made lines on the paper too. Soon the mothers were calling the children to go home, so they left. Sharon packed up her pencils and her sketch book and started to walk home.

On the way, she realized that the children were scared of the pencil because it looks like a spear. While we all know that a pencil is used for writing and drawing and having fun or doing work. They didn't. They don't go to school so they had never seen one.

They were terrified because the only long sharp pointed objects they've seen are the spears the soldiers and fighters bring to their houses. Sometimes they chase the women and children with them and poke the ones that try not to go. Sometimes they use the spears to kill their family and friends. Sometimes the soldiers and the fighters set fire to their houses in the children's villages with spears. The only thing these children had ever seen a long, sharp, pointed object used for is for destroying the things they love.

Now, some of us love to draw and color and we love our pencils and crayons. We love what they do when we hold them in our hands. They make pretty things that make our moms and dad's happy to so that we are happy too. But what if, the only thing you had seen a long, sharp, pointed object used for was to hurt or destroy? What do you think you would do?

God has given us many things that we can do more than one thing with. It is *how* we use the gifts that God has given us that matter most. In the case of the pencil and the spear, we can use them to create beautiful things and things like homework that help us learn, or we can use them to cause harm and fear and destroy. That is what we have to learn – the difference between using something to bring happiness and using something to tear apart. Which way do you think God wants us to use the gifts he has given us?

There is one way we can use our pencils to help the children of South Sudan and other places in the world who don't have pencils to work with. We can pray every time we pick up our pencil. We can ask God to protect the children who are in danger and to keep them safe.

Prayer: Let us pray.

Dear God, thank you for our lesson today that reminds us that we can use things for good or for bad. Thank you for reminding us we can use things to make others happy or to hurt them. Help us know the difference. And dear God be with the children who don't have pencils and the children who go to sleep afraid of long sticks that come in the night. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

